

## COUNTRY-WESTERN HEEL AND TOE

Everyone knows what country-western leg swings are about: heel touches forward, toe touches back, and whooping “Yee-haw!” And so it is with this activity for gait training and balance. The leg swing and foot motion of this activity can help with the leg swing and foot motion of walking, and the brief time spent on one foot is balance practice.

### ***Benefits »***

- ⦿ Practices sequential movements that may have some carryover to gait.
- ⦿ Improves core stability.
- ⦿ Practices one-legged standing.
- ⦿ Uses music.

### ***Set It Up »***

Provide balance support for each participant (sturdy chair, handrail, or walker). Find a slow to moderate country-western song that has a nice heel-toe beat.

### ***How to Do It »***

First, teach just the heel-touch.

#### ***Heel-Touch***

- ⦿ Have participants stand beside their chair with their feet parallel, shoulder-width apart. They can touch their chair with one hand and put their other hand on their hip. Knees are soft, cores are braced.
- ⦿ Have them place one heel out in front. Say, “Heel” (use leg farthest from the chair).
- ⦿ They draw it back and place it beside the other again. Say, “Together.”
- ⦿ Repeat a few times, using one word for each motion (heel, together, heel, together).
- ⦿ Keep the pace slow and deliberate.
- ⦿ Participants move to the other side of the chair and change legs.
- ⦿ Repeat the sequence.

#### ***Toe-Touch Back***

- ⦿ Those who feel they can, may add a toe-touch back.
- ⦿ Participants stand beside their chair with feet parallel and shoulder-width apart, knees soft.
- ⦿ Have them touch one heel out in front (cue “Heel”).
- ⦿ Have them swing the leg back and touch the toes on the ground behind them (cue “Toe”). (See Step and Stop on page 237.)
- ⦿ Repeat several times at half-speed. (Heel, pause, toe, pause; it’s a stop-and-start rhythm.)
- ⦿ Participants switch legs.

### ***Add Music***

- ⦿ Play music.
- ⦿ Do the heel-touch, feet together version first.

- ⦿ Those who want to can progress to heel-toe leg swings.
- ⦿ Call the movements at half-speed.
- ⦿ Participants can stop and start wherever they want. Be their model, but let them find the rhythm.

### **Give It More Balance »**

- ⦿ Hold onto the chair loosely.
- ⦿ Change legs every few times (stay on same side of the chair).
- ⦿ Put hands on hips. (Intermediate to advanced)
- ⦿ Advanced: Add reciprocal arm swings (the left arm swings forward when the right foot is out).

### **Keep It Safe »**

Let participants choose what they want to do and find their own pace.

### **Live It »**

This activity is helpful for gait and balance and is fun to do with music.